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Buffalo Bill's Mazeppa-Chase



"IT IS THE BLACK MUSTANG!" CRIED BUFFALO BILL.

OR,

DICK DEARBORN'S Death-Ride.

The Mystery of the Black Mustang.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "BUFFALO BILL" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"LITTLE DICK."

"THE redskins have captured him, and that means a terrible death."

"No, no, colonel; they would hardly kill the boy, but rather keep him to rear as one of their tribe."

"I fear not, major; I fear not; for, though you have had more experience with the red devils than I have, I know how merciless they can be.

"Alas! the news will kill his poor mother, for you know that twice before the boy has been taken from us. Once, when only seven years of age, he was stolen by gypsies when I was stationed in Virginia, and it was four years before we got him back, and then, imbued with the life he had been leading, he ran away from school a year after, going with a circus, with which he went to Mexico and South America, and for two years we mourned him as dead, when he came home of his own accord.

"Then I sent him to school for a short while, but, being ordered to take command of this post, I brought him here with me, hoping to make a soldier of him and win him from his old associations.

"But, he was so daring, I have feared he would get into trouble, and this third blow will break his mother's heart, I am convinced."

The speaker uttered the words in an impressive manner, and the one he addressed listened attentively to the revelation.

Both were army officers, the elder a handsome, soldierly man of forty, ranking as a colonel of infantry and the commandant of the frontier post known as Fort Farewell—so named when a Mormon camp, for it was in Arizona, below the Utah line.

Colonel Dearborn's companion, who sought to comfort him in his distress, was Major Darley Fairbanks, a cavalry officer, who had been in command of the post until it was found necessary for the Government to send a much larger force there to keep down the Indians.

With five companies of infantry, two troops of cavalry and a light battery of six guns had come Colonel Dearborn to take command.

Fort Farewell thus became a strong and important post, as was needed in that wild land, wherein the Indian hostiles then were numerous and in unusually ugly humor, while, with the Mormons to keep an eye on, and a lawless element of whites scattered here and there, the post force was not any too large, even when added to the two hundred men already there, under the command of the major.

Only a month had Colonel Dearborn been at Fort Farewell, when he had shown himself a perfect soldier and kind commander, firm in discipline but courteous to all, and he won the affections of officers and men alike.

Known in his own regiment as "Colonel Dick," the name had followed him, and, as he had brought his son with him, a perfect counterpart of himself, a youth of fifteen, the boy was given the name of "Little Dick," while his bright, handsome face, wit and cleverness soon made him the idol of the fort.

Mounted upon a wiry mustang, riding in a way that no one there could equal, owing to his circus training of over two years, and a splendid shot, the boy was not long in showing what he could do and that he knew not fear.

Time and again had he been warned of the danger of his going off alone, but he was indifferent to warnings, and one day did not return to the fort.

Night came and passed, and then the whole garrison was turned out in search of the missing boy.

But, vain the search, for at night the last party came in and the scouts reported seeing Indian signs about, and that the trail of the boy's mustang led right to them.

Then had the father given his son up for lost, and, seated in his quarters, had

uttered the words opening this story of real life in the Arizona wilds.

Major Fairbanks had been more deeply grieved at the loss of the boy than his brave nature cared to betray; yet he hoped for the best; and having heard the short sketch of the boy's life, as related by the colonel, but which was unknown to any others at the fort, he said:

"I would make no report of his disappearance, colonel, until assured that he has been captured or killed.

"The scout's report indicates capture by the Navahoes, and I lean to that belief; but there is a man due here to-morrow whom you have not yet met, for I sent him to Santa Fe with important despatches the day before you arrived, making an earnest appeal for a large force to be sent here. My other despatches had not gone through, as I had not heard of your being on the way. This man to whom I refer is the one I rely on to find out just what has happened to Little Dick—pardon me, your son."

"Who is this man, Major Fairbanks?"
"Buffalo Bill, sir, my chief of scouts," was the answer.

CHAPTER II. BUFFALO BILL.

"Buffalo Bill! I have heard much of the man; in fact, General Sheridan told me I would find him worth a regiment to me, and that but for his skill and cleverness, Fort Farewell would have been taken a year ago," answered Colonel Dearborn.

"It is true, sir; he has saved Farewell from capture half a dozen times, and also prevented our troops out on the scout from being ambushed time and again. In fact, colonel, he is the best frontiersman I ever knew, whether as guide, scout, Indian fighter or trailer. I have been most fortunate in having him here with me."

"And you say he is at Santa Fe now?"
"All my despatches seemed to fail in going through. I had two scouts killed while bearing them; a courier sent through by coach was never heard of, while a fourth was badly wounded, and still lies in the hospital. I therefore decided to send Cody—"

"This Buffalo Bill?"
"Yes, sir; his name is William F. Cody."
"And you do not fear that he will not get through?"

"Somehow, Colonel Dearborn, we all regard Cody as having been born under a lucky star, for he certainly bears a charmed life, and when he departed with those despatches, taking his own way of getting there, he coolly said to me:

"If not detained at Santa Fe, Major Fairbanks, I will be back by the first of the month." I set that return down as an assured fact; that he will be here, as he stated, I confidently expect."

"And the first of the month will be to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir, and with it will come Buffalo Bill—the fort mascot, as the men all regard him."

"You certainly have a high opinion of this man, major?"

"I have good reason for it, sir. He is chief of scouts here, and though I can name a dozen splendid men under him, not one of them has his way of getting at things, and he knows an Indian as he does himself.

"As for the lay of the land, as we say out here, he can guide through an unknown and perfectly pathless country, and can tell just where to find water and a good camp. He is a wonder, Colonel Dearborn."

"I should think so; but what can he do to find my poor lost boy?"

"I do not know, sir. I simply have con-

fidence in his ability to find him, as you will have when you meet the mascot, for his very presence inspires confidence."

"Heaven grant that he may soon come, for what you tell me gives me hope, and—"

"Chief Scout Cody, sir, asks if you will see him?" and an orderly approached at the door.

"I told you so!" cried the major, in an exultant tone, while Colonel Dearborn uttered a fervent "Thank God!"

"Show him right in, orderly," ordered the major, not waiting for his colonel to give the command.

A moment more and there strode into the room the chief of scouts at Fort Farewell!

Colonel Dearborn fixed his eyes upon the scout with the look of a man who would read his soul.

He saw a man over six feet in height, of splendid physique, wiry in form, quick in movement and yet with the calm dignity of conscious power, without the slightest trace of egotism or bravado.

His face was a study for an artist, so full of manliness it was, while the features were cast in a perfect mold.

The large, earnest, dark eyes, the indomitably firm mouth, shaded by a full mustache, the massive chin, softened by an imperial, and the long nut-brown hair, with his buckskin suit, top boots, and broad sombrero, made up a picture for the pen of the novelist, the admiration of the artist.

He saluted politely, the colonel first, then the major, and said, calmly:

"I have to report my return, sir, and hand you these return despatches." And he held out the official-looking papers.

The major threw them upon the table and said, warmly:

"Dash the despatches, Cody, until I have welcomed you back, and right glad am I to do so.

"But, let me present you to your new commander: Colonel Dearborn, this is William Cody, Chief of Scouts, and whom we call Buffalo Bill."

Colonel Dearborn had made his estimate of the man; he had read his character in his face; and now doubly interested, from what he hoped of him, he put forth his hand and said, in his courteous way:

"I am glad to meet you, Chief Cody, for I have heard good accounts of you from General Sheridan and other officers under whom you have served, not to speak of Major Fairbanks's splendid report of you."

"I thank them, sir, and you, Major Fairbanks; but I have an important report to make when you are at liberty to hear it, sir," and Buffalo Bill turned to Colonel Dearborn, his new commander, who replied:

"You went under orders from Major Fairbanks, so make your report to him, Chief Cody."

CHAPTER III.

AVOIDING A TRAP.

The day before the arrival of Buffalo Bill at Fort Farewell, when his coming was so longed for, he was riding along a rugged trail, winding down toward the Colorado River, at a crossing now known as Lee's Ferry.*

Coming in sight of the river, there flowing swiftly between its banks of towering cliffs, the view was truly grand, and the scout halted his horse for a few moments in profound admiration of the magnificent scene.

* Lee's Ferry was named after its ferryman, who was none other than John D. Lee, the Mormon Danite chief in the Mountain Meadow massacre. Seeking a secure hiding-place, he established himself in that yet desolate land and remained there until tracked down, long years after, and executed by the U. S. Government.—The Author.

Then continuing on his way down to the river's rim, he looked about for the little canoe which was kept on the other side of the stream, where the lone ferryman had a cabin; but, not seeing it, he did not call, and, speaking to his horse, he said:

"You have not only got to swim across, old pard, but carry my weight also, for the canoe is not in sight, and over we have got to go."

Drawing off his boots and tying them over his shoulder, he then at once rode into the swift current, striking out boldly for the other shore, then a quarter of a mile distant.

The brave and spirited steed had nearly reached the further shore when a side canyon opened up to view, and in it Buffalo Bill saw a dozen horses staked out, on its flat or meadow.

Running his eyes along the cliff, in a thicket of pines, close up to the cliff sides, he beheld a camp, the men there busy preparing supper over a small, smokeless fire.

"Some of my men; so I am in luck," muttered the venturesome rider.

But, as he nearly reached the shore, a better view of the camp revealed that the men were unknown to him, and that could but mean that they were foes, belonging to the lawless element of the country. Or, possibly, were they a band of Mormons, whom the wary scout was none too anxious to meet at that time.

To turn back would betray that he feared them, for he saw that he had been discovered, so he kept right on for a landing, determined to make a dash for the steep trail up the mountain side, several hundred yards from their camp.

As his horse gained a footing, a man came a short distance toward him and shouted:

"Ho, Nick! Put ye'r horse up ther canyon and then come on ter camp. Ther cap'n is anxious ter know what yer has found out."

Which was good proof to Buffalo Bill that he had been mistaken for one of their number, and he determined to help out the deception, so he shouted back:

"All right, pard! Tell the captain I'll soon be there."

The man turned back to camp, and Buffalo Bill rode on toward the canyon flat where he saw the horses of the men feeding.

If they were friends he would know by their actions when they saw that he was not obeying the instructions given him; if they were foes they would very quickly prove it by firing on him when they were convinced that he was going to give them the slip.

On he rode quietly, his horse in a walk, until he reached a point where he had either to turn into the side canyon or ride for the ferry trail up the mountain to the left.

He had kept his eyes upon the men in camp, and the more he saw of them the more he was convinced that they were a lawless band.

Down in the deep defile through which the Colorado ran, the shadows were gathering, though the sun was yet an hour high, and the camp and surroundings were seen as though at twilight.

At last the moment came for a break, and, suddenly whirling his horse to the left, the daring scout put him at full speed for the steep trail leading up the mountain, several hundred yards away.

He had gotten well started before the men in the camp realized his purpose—knew that he was not one of them returning from some mission upon which he had been sent.

There was wild excitement at once, men

springing to their feet, seizing their rifles, and shouts of command succeeded.

The flying rider could but feel rejoiced at his cleverly giving them the slip, as he had, and he answered their shouts with his ringing war-cry.

Instantly a silence followed, and the scout heard the words distinctly:

"That is Buffalo Bill's war-cry. A big reward to the man who kills or captures him!"

The voice was one of command, and he who uttered the words evidently was captain of the band.

His words were responded to by a shout, and the men, who were already rushing for their horses to mount and give chase, strove yet harder to reach them, several of the gang firing at the scout, who coolly dismounted at the mountain and led his horse up the steep, rough trail.

In five minutes a dozen horsemen, filing out of the side canyon, were in pursuit, but Buffalo Bill, a good quarter of a mile ahead, was still leading his horse, heading for the summit of the plateau, to which the Lee's Ferry trail ran.

CHAPTER IV. THE FLIGHT.

Buffalo Bill now was up in the full light of the sun, as it neared the western horizon, his pursuers being in the shadow below.

He saw that they had not dismounted, but were in the saddle and pushing their horses hard.

His horse, though a fleet one, and of great endurance, was just nearing the end of his long journey, and was, naturally, much worn.

His swim across the swift Colorado had cooled and refreshed him, however, and not having to bear the scout's weight half a mile up the steep mountain climb, had not been winded, though it was tiresome enough as it was.

Buffalo Bill had crossed at that point several times before, and, glancing back, he saw that he would gain the summit with his pursuers still several hundred yards behind him.

He wanted time for his horse to get a breathing spell, and, as his enemies were firing upon him, though without harm, he mounted, and, nearing as they were, he decided to whirl at the summit, take refuge behind the rocks scattered there, and take a hand himself in pulling trigger.

At last he reached the summit, and just there was a huge rock—a section of the cliff escarpment. Leading his horse behind this, he scrambled to the top, ran his rifle over, and, taking aim at the horse nearest to him, dropped him as he was struggling up the trail.

His rider nimbly caught upon his feet, and in a second had sought shelter behind some rocks, firing a well-aimed answering shot that just grazed the scout's head.

"I made a mistake that time, for the man is more dangerous on foot than mounted. Next time the innocent horse shall not be the sufferer," decided the scout, as he threw another shot into his breechloading rifle and brought it to his shoulder, for his first shot had not checked the other pursuers, who he saw were eight in number.

Again he fired, aiming at a tall, heavily-bearded man well in advance of the others. The man toppled from his saddle, and those who followed him were quickly brought to a halt, and began to dismount and scatter for shelter behind the ledges and rocks.

"I think we'll go on now, old fellow, while they are holding a council of war."

"They know me, but I have not the honor of their acquaintance. I have not

had a good look at them, though a little too close to them for comfort," and he spoke to his horse, as was his wont.

Mounting, he rode away at a gallop over the plateau, following along the base of a range of red cliffs that rose like a terrace a thousand feet above the comparatively level plain he was then on.

Looking back as he rode, he had passed out of range of an ordinary gun, when he beheld the men dash into view at the big rock he had left.

They were on foot, and surely had expected to flank and cover him there.

Their execrations of disappointment the scout clearly heard, and laughed at, especially as he saw that they had caught sight of him, and were firing at random. But a moment they halted; then ran for their horses to keep up the pursuit.

When they came in sight again, Buffalo Bill was continuing along nearly a mile ahead of them, and, as his horse had not been winded by being rushed up the steep trail, while their animals had so been pressed, he felt no anxiety about himself.

Then, too, night was not far away, and Buffalo Bill knew that he could elude all pursuit in the darkness; so he rode on, as unconcerned as though he had not just had a race for life, and been under a deadly fire, but which he had returned with apparently fatal effect.

As darkness began to gather about him, he saw that his pursuers were not gaining, so dismissed them from his mind, as far as their overtaking him was concerned.

But one thing troubled him, and that was as to just who those men were, and what they were doing at Lee's Ferry.

He remembered that the ferryman—who he did not then imagine could be Major John D. Lee, the man on whose head a price was set—had not been seen; nor the canoe in which the ferryman paddled men across while their horses swam.

A mystery had always hung about this lone ferryman, who dwelt half a mile up a side canyon, or feeder, in his cabin, as strongly built as a fort, and with no one but his faithful wife, who had followed him there to that far and most inhospitable wilderness.

Having no fear of redskins, or wandering bands of outlaws, he lived there, a perfect enigma to Buffalo Bill, who had a half-formed idea that he might be in league with both the redskins and lawless white men of Utah and Arizona.

Then, too, the scout recalled how he had been mistaken for Nick—one of the men of the camp on the river, returning from some mission, and the more he thought it all over, the more he became convinced that he had made a discovery which must be more fully disclosed.

"Yes, I must now know more—who are the gang and what they are doing here," he muttered as he rode on in search of some retired and safe camping-place.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLACK MUSTANG.

Buffalo Bill recalled as he rode along, watching the sun near the horizon beyond the rim of plain, that there was a splendid spring about ten miles from where he then was that would be a most desirable camping-place.

This spring had a most generous flow of water coming out of the head of a canyon, while plenty of dry willow wood was at hand; the grass grew luxuriantly around it, and the approach was open.

There was no other water within forty miles, save that of the Colorado River, whose banks were in sight down a couple of thousand feet, unless he returned by the trail he had come from Lee's Ferry.

But Buffalo Bill was not to be caught napping.

He was too well versed as a plainsman not to feel certain that his foes, assured that he must know of the spring, would go right there to find him, and would be likely to approach the spot on foot, hoping to catch him in a trap and unprepared.

So to the spring he would not go; instead, he would ride along close under the red cliff, come to some break and there seek shelter for the night.

His horse could get fairly good picking of grass, but no water, and he also must go thirsty, for he had intended filling his canteen at the Colorado, but had been prevented from doing so, as has been seen.

Seeing a break in the cliff, he turned toward it, and was glad to find there as good a camping-place as could be expected when wood and water were not to be found.

He, however, was glad to see that there was grass there.

The break extended back into the cliffs a distance of several hundred yards, it appeared, but he did not care to go further in, and perhaps be hemmed in by his pursuers.

Where he then was he could mount and dash out should he see them coming, and he had a view of over a mile back over the trail.

When darkness came he knew he could hear their horses' hoofs on the flinty trail, and so he was not alarmed.

So he took off the bridle, unsaddled his horse and staked him out, and then concluded he would climb up the cliff, as he saw that he could readily do, for fifty feet or more, and take a view further back over the trail by the last rays of sunlight.

Up the cliff he climbed to a ledge, where he found a good resting place, and was turning his eyes back over the trail, when his horse gave a startled snort, and, glancing quickly down into the canyon, what he saw held him spellbound.

The sun was just touching the horizon, and its rays penetrated back into the canyon.

There, dashing along at full speed, and coming out of the rocky recesses which he had not explored, was a large black mustang, his glossy hide not marred by a single spot that was not of a sable hue.

He was long bodied, clean limbed, and was flying along like the wind toward the open plains.

But that was not what startled the scout most.

The mustang wore no bridle or saddle, and yet had a rider, or, rather, bore a human form.

And that form was clad in buckskin, moccasins, a hunting shirt from which the sleeves had been torn, and for the purpose of firmly binding thongs about the bare arms, which thongs were made fast to a girdle about the body of the animal.

The face of the one thus bound, in the glance the scout obtained of it, looked young and well favored, and might be that of a youth, perhaps of a maiden.

Bound thus to the girdle, by waist, arms and legs, the form of the unknown Mazeppa was stretched at length upon the back of the black mustang.

"My God! What does, what can that mean?" cried Buffalo Bill, as he stood there on the ledge, helpless to aid, and beheld the black mustang plunge out of the canyon and strike across the plain in a wild, run-mad way, heading straight for the cliff banks of the Colorado, which went sheer downward a thousand feet.

It was a startling, painful sight to the scout, and he at first blamed himself for having climbed the cliff, for had he been in the canyon, and seen the horse coming, he might have caught him with his lariat.

Then he felt that he should have reconnoitered to the end of the canyon before dismounting, and then he could surely have lassoed the black mustang.

As he had done neither he could only do what he could, that was, saddle up and go in pursuit.

Rapidly he descended from the ledge, and ten minutes after the black mustang had passed him he was mounted and in pursuit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NIGHT CHASE.

Was it fancy, or did he really see a small, dark object in the distance, still rushing for the brink of the Colorado, several miles away? wondered Buffalo Bill.

His whole energy now was bent upon saving the life of that unfortunate being, man or woman, Indian or pale-face, that he had seen bound to the back of the black mustang.

Forgetting his own danger, he sought only the rescue of the unfortunate one.

Not a word had come from the lips to indicate even that the Mazeppa-like being was dead or alive, but in the momentary glance he had gotten of the form it had seemed to him that the eyes were open wide and each hand grasped the girdle about the waist of the flying horse.

If the animal was maddened by his strange burden, thus bound to him, he would dash blindly along, seeing nothing, and go over the precipice without a doubt.

But where had the mustang been up the canyon?

To the scout it seemed that the canyon ended but a few hundred yards further than he had gone.

Did it really penetrate further, perhaps continue on as a pass through the red cliffs.

It must be so, mused Buffalo Bill, or else the mustang had kept strangely quiet up the canyon.

So the scout thought as his horse sped onward over the plain.

Keeping his eyes steadily upon the dark spot he had noticed and taken for the runaway horse, he saw that he seemed to be drawing nearer to it.

Was that proof that it was but a rock, or was it the mustang and his own horse gaining upon it.

Still with fixed gaze upon the object, Buffalo Bill decided that it was the mustang, and nothing else, and more, that he was gaining upon him.

So the spurs touched the flanks of his splendid horse, and the animal at once stretched himself out into a great speed, such as few horses of the plains could equal.

But night had fallen, and the increased darkness shut the object out of sight.

Still Buffalo Bill kept up the same tremendous speed for a while, sufficiently long to feel that he had gotten well upon the mustang if the latter had not increased his pace, and then he came to a sudden halt, sprang from his saddle and stood a few feet away from his horse listening attentively.

Not far ahead he heard the rapid clatter of hoofs, and then as suddenly as a shot the sound ceased and a startled cry broke the stillness of the night, a stillness that in that land is awful.

Buffalo Bill was in his saddle in an instant and riding on again.

But he did not go at the same great speed, only at a canter.

He knew that the cliff banks of the Colorado were not far away.

Soon he felt the presence of the mighty chasm he could not see, and he drew rein, threw his rein upon the ground, and, dismounting, walked forward.

A cool air swept his face, coming up from the river rushing along in the depths of the earth, and in a moment more he beheld the vast void that marked the mighty chasm through which swept the grand Colorado over a thousand feet below.

But only the swish of the waters rose to his ears, no sound came to them of hoofs upon the rocky plain, and from his lips broke the words:

"My God! the black mustang has gone down with his unfortunate rider!"

For some moments he stood in deepest thought, conflicting emotions crowding upon him.

Then he said, sadly:

"Poor fellow!"

"I can do no good now, so I will push on, and after all I will go to the spring, for if those men are not there by that time they will not be, and if they are I won't care to camp there."

With this he turned his horse back toward the trail he had been following along the base of the red cliffs.

He had been a long time absent from the fort, so he would not delay to see how far back that canyon ran out of which had come the black mustang, or remain to find out who and what the band of white men might be.

So on he rode toward the springs,* keeping his horse at a steady trot, for he knew that he needed water, as he did, and both were very tired.

After a ride of a couple of hours he came in sight of the little vale in which the springs were, and where there was some timber, with sheltering cliffs all about.

But he did not care to halt there, for a glimmer of a camp-fire told him that his foes, or others were installed there before him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHOT IN THE DARK.

A feeling of deep disappointment swept over Buffalo Bill as he saw that the springs were already surrounded by campers.

He felt certain that they must be the men who had pursued him from the Colorado, and who had passed along the trail while he was in chase of the black mustang and his Mazeppa rider.

More concerned for his horse than for himself, he determined to at least give the animal a short rest, while he reconnoitered the camp, and then pushed on to the next oasis, a splendid spring, where the Mormons had once had a fort, and known as Jacob's Pool.

It would be a three-hours' longer rapid ride, but there his horse and himself could get delicious water, there was grass in plenty, and they could have six hours' halt before pushing on to Fort Farewell.

So the horse was left alone, and, rifle in hand, Buffalo Bill cautiously approached the camp.

He saw that a good fire had been built of the dry cedar wood scattered about, and, covered by the darkness, he dared go quite near.

There were horses staked out in the vale beyond the camp, and Buffalo Bill muttered:

"I'd leave that party on foot if I could only get their horses by the camp unseen."

But the vale was a narrow one, and the spring was near its entrance, and there was too much risk in attempting to lead the horses by for even Buffalo Bill, daring as he has ever been.

So he crept nearer and nearer the camp, and at last reached a rock that gave him a place of refuge.

It was not a hundred yards from the

* Now known as Soap Springs.—The Author.

camp, and he could see, by the firelight, all who were there, hear their voices, and now and then, when one spoke out louder than his fellows, he could catch the words.

The men were eight in number, and they were cooking supper.

They were his followers from the Colorado.

As he looked and listened attentively he distinctly heard the words:

"It's a pity we missed him, for he's just curious enough, now he's seen us, to want to know all about us."

"That's me," grimly muttered the scout.

But he heard nothing else so plainly uttered, and yet twice caught his own name, a further proof that he was the one being discussed.

That they had followed him, then, confident that he would not expect further pursuit and go into camp at the spring, he was certain.

But he had been too clever for them.

Not finding him there, they had gone into camp themselves.

Each face and form, as narrowly as he could see them, the scout made a mental photograph of, so that he would recognize them again, should he meet them about the fort or elsewhere.

Then he cautiously withdrew from his position, with the grim remark:

"They are in luck that I am their foe, for almost any one else would send a few bullets into that camp."

"I am sure I could kill a couple of them and then easily escape; but I hope I'll never come to taking human life, white man or redskin, without being forced to do so."

With this he withdrew as cautiously as he had come, and, regaining his horse, said:

"We've been thrown out here, old fellow, and it's a long ride to Jacob's Pool."

"But the water there is colder and better, and the grass is greener, so we have that satisfaction, while we'll have a shorter distance to go to-morrow."

With this consolation, under difficulties, for himself and his horse, he mounted and held on his way.

The horse seemed to realize the situation exactly, and set out at a willing canter, holding it mile after mile.

With occasional dismounts and walks of half a mile over uneven ground, or up and down ravines, to spare his horse, Buffalo Bill held on his way for three hours, and then rounded the point of cliffs beyond which, up a vale, was Jacob's Pool.

It was after midnight, and the scout approached the place cautiously.

There might be campers there before him also.

He dismounted and approached on foot.

As he neared the pool he heard a sound that at once put him upon his guard.

He did not seek safety in retreat, did not halt, but approached, yet with cautious steps and rifle in hand.

Another moment, and he beheld his foe, and there was a sudden spring, a quick shot, a fall, and the foe fell heavily, to rise no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCOUT'S RETURN.

Loud snorts from Buffalo Bill's horse told him that he, too, had scented a foe.

But with the rifle-shot the animal at once quieted down, as though he fully understood the unerring aim of his master.

The foe that Buffalo Bill had found at the pool was not a pale-face nor an Indian, but a lone mountain lion, the natural foe of man.

He had come to the spring both to quench his thirst and satisfy his hunger, for he had found there a band of ante-

lopes, and, creeping upon them with the stealthy tread of a cat upon a bird, he had made his spring and brought down his innocent victim.

The band had fled, and the mighty mountain lion was enjoying his midnight supper when the approach of the scout had disturbed him.

The horse had scented danger, and put the scout on his guard, and when he heard the low, angry snarl, Buffalo Bill knew just what he had to expect.

He prepared for it accordingly, and when the animal was about to spring, his finger touched trigger, and the powerful beast fell heavily and lay writhing in agony, a bullet in his brain.

A short while, and the lion was dead, and enough of the antelope was left for Buffalo Bill to get a good steak for himself.

So his horse was led up and watered, then unsaddled and staked out, wood was gathered, a fire built in the crevices of the cliff, and then the scout cooked his supper and enjoyed it.

Stretching himself out not far from his horse, his blankets wrapped about him, Buffalo Bill, tired as he was, soon sank to sleep, to awaken only when the daylight appeared.

Quickly he arose, watered his horse, had breakfast, and, mounting, was off on his long ride to the fort, anxious to reach there early in the afternoon, and with a long rest and food before his horse there, he was not afraid to push him for the miles that were to be gone over.

A dozen miles from his night camp he came upon a trail crossing his own.

Instantly he halted, dismounted, and followed it for some distance, where it was lost sight of by the nature of the ground.

"Both pale-faces and Indians, or the latter, have captured horses from the fort, or the former have corralled some redskins; which I cannot tell, as the trail is lost, and I would have to follow it to a camping place to find out."

With this he moved on his way once more, and, without further adventure, came in sight of the fort.

His experienced eye told him at once that the fort had been reinforced.

More guns looked over the stockade and earthworks, a larger number of horses were feeding out in the valley and there was an air of bustle about the fort which only a much increased force could give.

When he approached the entrance a strange officer on duty as officer of the day greeted him, and riding to headquarters he found an orderly there he did not know, not Major Fairbanks's man.

Then he sent in to report his return by the orderly, and being admitted, as has been seen by the reader, he cast a quick glance at the new commander, as the latter did at him, as though to read just what kind of man the colonel commanding was.

He was at once struck with his soldierly appearance, and more than pleased with his kind and complimentary reception of him, and thought:

"Colonel Dearborn is the right man in the right place."

When Buffalo Bill had heard the words of Colonel Dearborn, that he had gone to Santa Fe under orders from Major Fairbanks, and to make his report of his trip to the latter, he saluted and remarked:

"As reinforcements have come to the fort, sir, there is little to report to Major Fairbanks, other than that I delivered his despatches, and bring him these return ones, but it is of my return trail that I would speak, and without delay, as I deem I have something of importance to report."

"I will be a listener then, so report to

Major Fairbanks, for I am but a student out in this country as yet," was the cautious rejoinder of Colonel Dearborn, and then he added:

"But I have already had some bitter experience fall to my lot, Chief Cody, and I look to you for aid, when you have made your report to Major Fairbanks," and the sad expression resting upon the commandant's face convinced Buffalo Bill that something had already gone wrong at the fort since the arrival of the reinforcements.

But he had too much tact to show any curiosity upon the subject.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STORY TOLD.

William Cody turned to Major Fairbanks, as the colonel directed him to do, and said:

"I carried your despatches through to Leavenworth, sir, and found that reinforcements had already been sent to Fort Farewell."

"The commandant, however, gave me these return despatches for you, sir."

"Had you no trouble in getting through, Cody, and back again?" asked Major Fairbanks.

"I had some dodging of Indians to do, sir, going, and coming back a chase by a gang of outlaws yesterday, but I had a fast horse, and eluded them at night."

"You were fortunate, for the white men of this country, who are lawless, are even more bitterly your foes than are the Indians."

"Where did you see these men?"

"At the crossing of the Colorado, sir, at Lee's Ferry."

"They were on this side, in camp, and mistook me for one of their number coming in, while I supposed they were scouts, until my horse had swum nearly across the river, and then I decided to keep on and make a run for it."

"They called out to me to stake my horse out with theirs up a canyon, and then come to camp, as they had news for me, so I rode on as though about to do so, until I got past where they were, when I made a break for the trail leading up the hill."

"They fired on you then?"

"Yes, sir; but did no damage, and running to the canyon, they mounted their horses and gave chase."

"To rest my horse, I went on foot up the steep trail, and did not urge him; but I gained the top while they were yet several hundred yards away, and, anxious to give them to understand that I had a good rifle, I brought down one of their horses."

"Why not a man instead?"

"Well, sir, I do not care to take life when there is not actual need for it."

"You are a remarkable man, Mr. Cody," said the colonel, with real admiration for a frontiersman, who he had supposed, like many others, was ready to kill a fellow-being upon the slightest pretense.

"I should have supposed you would have deemed it a necessity, Cody, for I certainly would have," said Major Fairbanks.

"Not as I could escape, sir, without great risk."

"But I saw that I had made a mistake, and to check them, while my horse got a minute more of rest, I fired at their leader, as I supposed him to be, next time, and he fell heavily from his saddle."

"I know your unerring aim, Cody," the major remarked.

"I fired to kill, sir, aiming at his head, and then cantered on ahead, as I saw all dismounted, to advance on foot under cover of the rocks."

"And you saw them no more?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"Tell us the whole story, Cody, for we are anxious to hear it, and see if there is any connection between it and something I have to tell you."

"I decided that it would not be wise for me to camp at Soap Springs, as that would be the very place to come to look for me, and so I sought a break in the cliff, what I supposed was a shallow canyon, to spend the night; though, not having a chance to fill my canteens at the river, I had to make a dry camp of it."

"Wishing to see if I could discover my pursuers, I staked out my horse and climbed up the cliff to a ledge of rock fifty feet high, and it was unfortunate that I did so."

"Why so?"

Buffalo Bill then went on to tell the story of his having seen the black mustang and his bound rider dash past his horse down in the canyon, and straight across the plain toward the Colorado River.

"My God! can it have been my boy?"

"You say that he was a youth, or maiden, you believe?" cried the colonel, excitedly.

"As nearly as I could see, sir, for it was just sunset, and I was looking down upon him and all of a hundred and fifty feet away from the mustang as he flashed out of the canyon."

"Tell me again just what you saw?" asked the colonel.

"A large black mustang, sir, a splendid animal, apparently, without bridle or saddle, but with one or more girdles around him, and strapped to them, the head toward the neck, and resting upon the broad shoulder of the animal, either a young man or woman."

"Go on, Mr. Cody! go on!"

"He was secured by thongs about the arms, the waist, and knees, as well as I could tell, and I did not know whether he was dead or alive, for it must have been a man, though the eyes were wide open."

"He uttered no cry?"

"None, then, sir."

"You can tell how he was dressed?"

"Yes, sir, in buckskin leggings and hunting shirt, while he also wore moccasins, and his hair was dark and rather long."

"My God! Fairbanks, that was my poor boy," groaned the colonel, while the major said, sadly:

"I very much fear so, Colonel Dearborn."

CHAPTER X.

THE SCOUT-DETECTIVE.

There had been a look of dread upon Major Fairbanks's face as Buffalo Bill was telling his story, which the latter could not fail to observe.

The major had begun to fear that the unknown Mazeppa would prove to be none other than the colonel's son, Little Dick.

When he had replied as he did to Colonel Dearborn he turned to the scout and said:

"I wish to tell you the situation as it is, Cody, and I was anxious for your return that you might help us out, for I appreciate what you can do."

"Thank you, sir."

"When the colonel came to take command here, he brought with him his son, a youth of fifteen—may I tell Cody, sir, something of your son's history?"

"Certainly; let him know all, for we depend upon him to save poor Dick."

Major Fairbanks then told about the early life of the missing youth, and that if he had been captured by Indians he feared the shock would kill his poor mother, who was in the East, not having been well enough to come out there with her husband.

"Now, Cody," continued the major, "Little Dick, as the soldiers all call him, is a little wonder, and was the idol of the whole post."

"He could ride, shoot, and, in fact, was far in advance of his years, and daring to recklessness."

"He rode away from the fort two days ago to hunt, as he had done before, and failed to return."

"The whole post was searching for him yesterday, but in vain, but the scouts brought in word there were signs of Indians about, and the trail of Little Dick's horse led right to where these signs appeared, so that seemed to be proof undoubted that he had been captured by redskins, and I was telling the colonel not to despair until you had returned, taken his trail, and given it up, and just then the orderly announced you."

"May I ask on what kind of horse the young man rode away from the fort, sir?" said Buffalo Bill.

"A very pretty, spotted mustang."

Both officers looked eagerly at the scout, awaiting what more he would say.

He was quiet for a moment, and then said:

"How far did the scouts follow his trail, sir?"

"About ten miles from the fort."

"Was he in the habit of going that far away, sir?"

"Never before," the colonel said.

"There was but one trail, sir?"

"Yes."

"And when the scouts lost it they found the Indian trail?"

"Yes."

"In about what force, sir?"

"Some thirty, it was said."

"And which way did their trail lead, sir?"

"Toward the Colorado River, and since you have reported these men in the camp there, I begin to believe they were not Indians, after all."

"Have you lost any of the fort horses of late, sir?"

"None."

"Have any scouting parties of cavalry captured any Indians, sir?"

"Not one."

"Why do you ask both questions, Cody?"

"I came upon a trail, sir, crossing mine, some dozen or so miles away, and it was made up of both shod horses and unshod ponies, and I was sure that the redskins had stolen some of your animals, or the cavalry had captured some Indians."

"There were about thirty or forty in the party, more unshod ponies than shod horses, and I followed them until the nature of the ground gave no trail."

"And this trail bore toward the Colorado?"

"It did, sir, in that direction."

"That would mean that both Indians and whites had captured the boy?"

"Yes, sir, and that the lad was bound to the horse, as I saw him, goes to show that white men did that, for Indians would not."

"Colonel Dearborn, in addition to being a perfect plainsman, Buffalo Bill is a natural-born detective, and had his lot been cast in a large city he would have made fame for himself as a shadower."

"Now I feel that he is on the right track in this matter, and I wish him to feel at liberty to ask any question he feels disposed to, and also to have full sway to call for all the aid he may need in this matter."

"I have seen instances where Cody's detective skill has won a case against all others working against him, and I believe if he undertakes to find your son, he will do so, be he dead or alive, and more, run

down the men who have torn him from you."

"My dear major, let me say to you and to our good friend here, that I will answer any questions, do anything, lend all aid in my power in every way that he wishes me to, if he will only ferret out the mystery of my poor boy's disappearance."

"I see already, from the way he goes about it, that Mr. Cody is going to get at bottom facts first, and then work out his plot, and he has but to call upon me in any way he deems fit, to have me respond most promptly," and the colonel spoke with great earnestness.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COLONEL'S CONFESSION.

Buffalo Bill was silent for a moment after hearing the colonel's words, and neither officer interrupted him.

He was thinking that he thought he could solve the mystery of the boy's fate, for he recalled how, as he believed, the black mustang had gone over the cliff into the Colorado River to sudden death.

He remembered the cry he heard, and to him it seemed as a despairing shriek in the presence of an awful doom, just such as dashing down to destruction would be.

But he would not yet tell the poor father what he had seen and heard.

He would wait until he was sure.

He would give the father hope to feed upon until there was no longer room for hope.

So he asked, suddenly:

"Pardon me, Colonel Dearborn, but have you any foes out here?"

The colonel started at the abrupt question, and he bit his lip as though angered by the interrogation, but he answered with no show of resentment:

"No; I know of none out here."

"You said you would answer my questions, sir, so you will pardon me if I seem personal, for I wish to get at the foundation of this mystery and track it up."

"Ask what you will, Cody, for I see that you are indeed a detective in your work."

"Are there any of your men, sir, who have served on the frontier before?"

"I mean, of course, sir, those whom you brought with you?"

"There are two troops of cavalry that were stationed out on the frontier before."

"Have you punished any man among them, sir?"

"I have not."

"Do you know of any of your immediate men—pardon me again, sir, but I will include officers also—who have any reason to hate you for just or imaginary cause?"

The colonel allowed a smile to flit over his sad face for an instant, while Major Fairbanks began to look slightly annoyed.

But the colonel replied in the same even tone:

"I know you are a good scout, Cody, but I think you would also have made a most excellent lawyer. As I am on the witness-stand, however, I will frankly answer you, for I feel that you are asking questions that good may come out of them."

"I am, sir."

"I do not just see why you include officers, Cody," said Major Fairbanks.

"Because, sir, I know that officers have sinned, have been revengeful, and they certainly have more power to work evil than their men have, Major Fairbanks."

"You are right—go ahead."

"The use of the word revengeful tells me what you are looking for—a motive."

"Yes, sir."

"Then, Cody, let me tell you that if I have wronged any officer or man of my command, I do not know it, and if there is

one who holds any ill-will toward me, I am unaware of it also, and I am sorry for it, if so."

"You said if any one, sir; does that mean in your command alone?"

"Ah! I did so mean it."

"And out of the army, sir?"

The colonel looked Buffalo Bill straight in the face, and again the major seemed annoyed, but looked relieved when Colonel Dearborn said:

"Mr. Cody, I have one foe who has been almost a curse to me, for he has caused me and my wife untold unhappiness."

"And where is he now, sir?"

"I have been led to believe that he is dead."

"Have you any proof of it, sir?"

"I confess that I have not."

"Do you mind telling me, sir, if he were alive, if he is capable of striking a blow out here to injure you or cause you sorrow?"

"Great God! yes!"

"He is capable of any crime!" excitedly said the colonel.

"Has he the power, sir, with the will, to harm you?"

"Yes."

"When did you last hear of him, sir?"

"Two years ago."

"And heard that he was dead?"

"Yes; I saw an account in the papers that he was killed."

"East, sir?"

"No; out in the mines of California."

"You have no other proof of his death, sir?"

"None."

"How was he killed, may I ask, Colonel Dearborn?"

"In a brawl in the mines, where he had developed into a desperado."

"Pardon me again, sir, but was his enmity toward you caused by real or imaginary wrongs?"

The colonel's face flushed, but he replied:

"I am on the rack, Cody, and will not shrink from the pain."

"He was my rival for the hand of my wife."

"By false representations he had turned her against me; but I went in person to defend myself, and arrived in time to prevent her father forcing her into a marriage with my traducer."

"I not only prevented the marriage, but I gave proof of his treachery to me, and the result was that he hired an assassin to go with him to take my life."

"I was too quick for them, for I killed the hireling and slightly wounded the other."

"But he was recognized as a would-be assassin, and thus forced to fly, and the next I heard of him was when my boy was stolen by gypsies and came back to us years after, and I knew that he had dealt the blow."

"Again my boy was taken away from us, to return after two years' wandering with a circus in South America, and from all I can learn from him, that man was at the bottom of his carrying off."

"Now you have the whole story, Cody, and I take in just why you have asked the questions you have, to get at a motive for my son's disappearance, other than the belief that he was captured by Indians."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCOUT'S DETECTIVE DEAL.

The colonel had spoken in a manly, frank manner, telling all, hiding nothing; and seeing that he had done so, and held no ill-will toward Buffalo Bill, Major Fairbanks felt easy regarding the inquisition of questioning him the scout had put him upon.

Buffalo Bill had listened with the deepest attention.

Not a word had escaped him, and when the colonel had made his confession, he said:

"I am glad that you have told me all that you have, sir."

"I told you I would."

"I know you appreciate my motive, sir, and I wish to say that what you have said relieves every man at this fort of any suspicion, unless it may be that your foe may have a friend in one of the cavalry troops that came with you, sir, and which you say were stationed upon the frontier before."

"That we must find out, sir, and you can do so by discovering if any soldier is from the neighborhood of where your enemy lived and knew him."

"Ah! a good idea, indeed, and I will have their captains get me the particulars."

"Let me caution you, sir, that any suspicion aroused might spoil all."

"True; I will be most careful."

"Now, sir, I am confident that Indians had nothing to do with the capture of your son, or, if they did, they acted for some one else."

"Why do you think so?"

"Well, sir, Indians don't make Mazeppas of pale-face captives."

"True," said the major.

"Then, sir, that binding of your son, taking it for granted that it was your son, upon the back of the black mustang, was an act of revenge."

"It was meant to hurt both the boy and some one else."

"And you do not expect to find my boy alive?"

"I will not say that, sir."

"I have hope, then?"

"I lost sight of the black mustang on the plain above the Colorado River."

"I then came on to Soap Spring, to find my pursuers had gone there in search of me, and there camped."

"And then?"

"I came on to Jacob's Pool and spent the night, and, Major Fairbanks, I killed a splendid specimen of a mountain lion there, and brought you the skin."

"Thank you, indeed, Cody, it was just what I was anxious to get, you know, to send to General Sheridan."

"Well, I brought head, claws and all, sir, to dress; but let me say now that it is my intention to start out at dawn to-morrow and take the trail of Master Dick's spotted pony."

"About noon, sir, I will have my scouts, twelve of them, at least, and would like to have a troop of cavalry take my trail and follow me, for I will mark it well."

"They shall start when you wish, Cody."

"And, major, if you will have the scouts and troopers all ride unshod Indian ponies, I would be obliged, sir, so their trail will look like one made by redskins, not by soldiers."

"All right, I will so instruct them, and I will send Lieutenant Edward Keyes and his troop."

"Thank you, sir; he is the very officer for me, and a better Indian fighter is not at the fort."

"No; he likes these scouting expeditions, too."

"Now, sir, I wish to ask if you have known of any strangers having been seen around the fort or adjacent camps of late?"

"I have not heard of any, sir."

"If you will kindly make inquiry, sir, and send me word by Lieutenant Keyes, I will feel obliged, sir."

"I will do it, Cody."

"And now, Colonel Dearborn, I would

like to ask if you will describe this enemy of yours to me, sir."

"Yes, certainly."

"When I saw him last, which was a trifle over fifteen years ago, he was a man then of twenty-five."

"He was tall, well-formed, broad-shouldered, with small hands and feet, and bright blue eyes and black hair, and mustache—in fact, a handsome man, though with a strikingly peculiar face."

"He also, I remember, had gleaming white teeth, and had a way of showing them when moved that gave him a rather fierce look."

"What was his calling, sir?"

"He inherited a fortune, and did nothing particular but squander it; but he loved horses, was fond of hunting, a great rider and sport."

"Thank you, sir."

"I will go now and get some rest, and then make my preparations for to-morrow's work," and Buffalo Bill departed from headquarters, the colonel shaking hands warmly with him and saying:

"I leave all to you, Mr. Cody."

As the scout left the room Colonel Dearborn turned to Major Fairbanks and said, earnestly:

"That man will either find my boy or know his fate, and, if the victim of cruelty, will avenge him."

"Why, Fairbanks, he is a perfect wonder, a born detective, as you said, and he has gone into this matter with the vim he would enter a deal of his own, and he will ferret it all out, shadow the guilty slayers of my boy to doom, for, alas! I cannot but feel that he is dead."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE START.

When it was known that Buffalo Bill had returned to the post, many were heard saying, both officers and men:

"Now we will know just what has befallen Little Dick."

It was early the next morning when the colonel arose, for he had had a sleepless night, grieving for his lost boy.

He attended strictly to his duties, gave no sign to others what he suffered, but all knew that he did suffer greatly.

When he went to his headquarters, from his living cabin, he found a scout there awaiting him.

"I am from Chief Cody, sir, and he wished me to say that he readily picked up Master Dick's trail, and will stick to it."

"I am to guide Lieutenant Keyes, sir, and any instructions you have for the chief of scouts I will take them, he told me to say, sir."

"Thank you, my man."

"Your name is Denny, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; the boys call me Dave for short."

"Major Fairbanks gave a good account of you, and I believe it was you that brought back word that my son's trail ended just where there was an Indian trail crossing it?"

"Yes, sir, at the place where the Indians had been encamped for some little while, as though waiting for some one."

"Well, I am glad that you are to be Lieutenant Keyes' guide, and you can tell your chief, Cody, that I have every confidence in him."

"You may have, sir, for he can trail a fox, and if any one can get Master Dick back again, he will do it."

"What time did he start?"

"We were at the spot where he was to pick up the trail when the dawn broke, sir, and that was three miles from here, and he has already been over two hours following it."

"The lieutenant starts at one, sir, after

dinner, as Chief Cody wished me to tell him that would be soon enough."

"Cody knows best," and with a few more words with Dave Denny, as though to get what consolation he could from him, Colonel Dearborn entered his office and went to work to keep his thoughts occupied with other things than his son.

But every now and then his mind would turn to the disappearance of his son, and he would muse to himself:

"What a very remarkable man that chief of scouts is.

"If he had gone to West Point and become a trained soldier he would have made a great name for himself.

"I have heard that he has had a wonderfully eventful life, and he inspires all with perfect confidence in what he can do.

"Why, if I had been a witness before a court he could not have drawn from me under oath more than he did of my past.

"I was in hopes that the past was dead, buried, and no more sorrow would fall upon my beautiful life.

"I had looked upon Kenneth Carr as dead, but from Cody's questioning, I begin to really believe that was a false rumor of his death, and that he still lives to bring grief to my wife and I.

"It would be like his acts of the past, and Cody says that if the one on the black mustang was poor Little Dick, he was bound there for revenge, and Indians would not so avenge their wrongs.

"I will not let my wife yet know of Dicks' disappearance, and I will make a request to the officers and men, that in visiting home they do not speak of it, for fear it may reach her ears, for I really have hope that that strange man Cody will yet find the boy."

So the colonel mused until Major Fairbanks came in and reported that Cody had started before dawn, ridden his best horse, and gone well provisioned.

Also he said that Lieutenant Keyes was selecting Indian ponies for his men and Dave Denny had already gotten those for his scouts, who were to go, and he had picked his men.

The lieutenant had also picked his troopers, and would be accompanied by his second lieutenant, an assistant surgeon, carry along ample supplies for a long trail, a few extra ponies, and forty men, which, with the scouts, would give him command of fifty fighting men.

Colonel Dearborn seemed much gratified at the great interest taken by one and all, and he became more assured that the expedition would be successful, for he said:

"Well, major, led by that man Cody, I have confidence that my boy will be rescued, or avenged, and if my enemy, Kenneth Carr is his name, is at the bottom of this crime, he will be taken and punished."

And the sympathizing major could not but muse to himself, for Buffalo Bill had told him of his belief that the black mustang had gone over the brink of the precipice into the Colorado:

"Cody may avenge him, yes, but never find the poor boy alive."

But he did not by word or look destroy the confidence of the colonel that he would again see him alive.

CHAPTER XIV. THE TRAILERS.

Lieutenant Keyes, a handsome young officer, who had already made a name for himself, had an early dinner at his cabin, and then went to report at headquarters.

He was wished success by his brother officers, one of whom said:

"If you and Cody do not bring the boy back, Keyes, then he cannot be found."

When he reported at headquarters Lieutenant Keyes was ready for work, as his appearance indicated.

He was rigged out for hard service, had left all unnecessary trappings behind him, and he had his men go the same way.

"I am ready, Colonel Dearborn, and I have my best men and a fine lot of ponies, and Dave Denny, the scout, and those with him are the pick of the buckskin band."

"Well, lieutenant, I have only to say that I leave all in your hands, and with Cody ahead, and you to rely upon, no more can be done.

"Good-by, Lieutenant Keyes, and, believe me, I appreciate all you are doing from kindness to me outside of your duty."

Five minutes after Lieutenant Keyes was in the saddle, and as the command rode out of the fort the whole garrison had assembled to give them a hearty send-off and bid them God-speed on their way.

"They are a gallant band, major, and that young Keyes is a splendid type of a true soldier," said Colonel Dearborn.

"He is indeed, sir, and he is going now determined to achieve success, for he said in the mess hall that with Cody ahead it was assured.

"But I have to report, sir, that there are several men in one of the companies you brought with you who know of your old enemy, Kenneth Carr."

"Indeed?"

"There are three who appear to know of him, one coming from the neighborhood where he dwelt, who knew him years ago.

"I did not get this information from him, sir, but from a sergeant who told me that when the man was drunk on one occasion he gave a great deal of his past history away to him, told him he had known you as a youth, and you had had trouble with a rival whom you drove out of the country, and who was a cousin of his; but, pardon me, sir, he went on to state that now you were a colonel and he only a private, you did not remember him."

"It was not intentional, I assure you.

"Who is the man, major?"

"Bradley Moore, sir, of B Troop."

"Bradley Moore—I never knew the man, at least by that name—ah! now I recall a youth, a cousin of Kenneth Carr, and a ne'er-do-well fellow who ran away from home; but his name, as I knew him, was Brad Moorehouse, and it may have been Bradley, and he have dropped the latter part of his surname."

"Describe him, please, major."

The major did so, and then added:

"The sergeant further told me, sir, that when Private Moore sobered up he came to him and asked him not to think of anything he had told him, and wished to know what he had told him, and he replied nothing of any moment, but that he was sure that while under the influence of liquor the man had shown an ill-feeling toward you."

"I know the man, now that you describe him, and I once asked him if I had not seen him before, but he said no.

"Yes, he is the one I knew as Brad Moorehouse, and Carr's cousin.

"Major, will you keep your eye on that man for me, please?"

The major promised, and feeling every confidence in the sergeant, he told him his desire to learn more of the man whose tongue had been talkative when under the influence of liquor.

In the meantime the little command under Lieutenant Keyes had settled down to steady work on the trail.

Ahead rode Dave Denny, and following him were two scouts, ready to obey his call.

Behind them at some little distance came Lieutenant Keyes and his brother officer, Lieutenant Ogden Ross.

Then came the troopers, the pack-animals and extra ponies followed them, and, bringing up the rear, were the remaining scouts, nine in number.

Buffalo Bill had left signs, as he had gone along, so that those following would not lose time in looking for the trail, and when the party arrived at the spot where the trail of Little Dick's spotted pony had been lost amid the tracks of the Indians, a halt was called.

There Dave Denny found a note fastened on the top of a stick, and it was addressed to Lieutenant Keyes.

Opening it, the officer read in lead pencil.

"The boy's trail ends here, being merged in with a number of other tracks, both shod and unshod.

"I have made one important discovery, so will not follow the trail from here, but will you kindly divide your force and send half on after the Indians from here, the others after me?"

"CODY."

"Cody knows what he is about, so I will do as he requests," said Lieutenant Keyes.

CHAPTER XV.

LIKE AN APPARITION.

Lieutenant Keyes at once read Cody's note aloud to Lieutenant Ogden Ross, and Dave Denny, and the division of the force was accordingly made.

Lieutenant Ross, with twenty soldiers, five scouts, and half the pack-animals, was to go on after the Indian trails, which the tracks showed numbered something over thirty horses.

Lieutenant Keyes and the balance of the troopers, with Dave Denny and four other scouts, were to follow on after Buffalo Bill.

The party under Lieutenant Ross pushed on, anxious to go as far as possible before having to camp for the night, for the trail could not be followed after darkness set in.

After several miles they came to just where Buffalo Bill had lost it, on his way to the fort, having pressed on to Farewell, it will be remembered, not caring to take time to search for the trail.

Lute Burns, the scout with Lieutenant Ross, was a good man, as were all of Buffalo Bill's Buckskin Band, as they were called.

He had been trained under a thorough tutor, and when the trail was lost on the hard lava plain, he at once sent two of his men to either side to flank around the plateau and pick it up again, while the command halted to await the result.

In half an hour a shot on the right told that the two scouts in that direction had found it, so, sending a man to recall the other couple on the left, Lute Burns pushed on, the soldiers following.

They found that the trail had been picked up at a pool, the existence of which was not known to a scout at the fort, unless to Buffalo Bill.

There the Indians had evidently camped for the night, and from there the trail was followed, though over the lava soil it was no easy work, until it led, by a steep and rugged path, upon a lofty plateau high above the plain that formed the banks of the Colorado River.

Here another pool was found, and as night was falling, a halt was made.

The command was astir before dawn, breakfast over, and all ready to start as soon as the light enabled them to see the trail.

Then Lute Burns made a discovery.

"The trail divides here, sir," he said.

"I see very faint imprint of any trail, Burns."

"True, sir; but here the iron-shod hoofs certainly turn to the right, not going over this plateau, but following along around its base, for that way they can reach the lower plateau, and so continue on to Lee's Ferry."

"Then we will divide our forces, Lute, for the sergeant can take eight men and four scouts, and follow the tracks of the iron-shod horses, while you go with me and the rest of the men over the plateau," responded Lieutenant Ogden Ross.

This being decided upon, for Lute Burns had said that each party must meet at Lee's Ferry from the way the trails led, and that was the rendezvous appointed with Lieutenant Keyes, the sergeant rode off with his force, the lieutenant following the trail of the Indian ponies up the steep way that led up to the plateau a thousand feet above their heads.

It was a very hard climb, and every man made it on foot, even the ponies, as sure-footed as mountain sheep, finding it difficult to pick their way.

But the Indians had gone that way before them, and though they saw where one unfortunate pony had lost his footing and been dashed to death far below, white men would not back down before a danger Indians had surmounted.

At last the summit was reached, and a breathing spell was given to horses and men.

The summit was a rolling plain, barren and rising thousands of feet above the bed of the Colorado River.

The lower plain was visible, a thousand feet below them, with the mighty chasm that marked the way of the Colorado miles and miles distant.

Following this up with their eyes, they saw far away the towering red cliffs that overhung the Colorado at Lee's Ferry, and knew that the trail they were following could lead no other way, descending by a path as steep and dangerous, doubtless, as the one they had climbed to reach where they then were.

After resting, Lute Burns again rode to the front, the lieutenant and his men following, and one and all impressed by the grandeur of nature all about them.

The trail led along the plateau, well back from the cliffs on either side, for it was a mighty tableland, and soon all trace of it was lost on the hard ground.

But it could go no other way than straight ahead, and Lute Burns was pushing on, when suddenly, out of the very ground, appearing like an apparition, arose a horse and rider a couple of hundred yards off on his right.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT THE CEDARS CONCEALED.

When Lieutenant Keyes had branched off from the pool, following the tracks that led toward the Colorado, Dave Denny found little difficulty in keeping the trail until it came out upon the plateau that stretched away to the Colorado.

Here it seemed that the tracks had scattered, but keeping along with the greatest number that kept together, they soon came to Jacob's Pool, and here a halt was made for the night.

Here, too, the scattered trail had come together again.

Like the command of Lieutenant Ross, all were up before dawn and ready to start upon the trail.

Again the tracks scattered, yet appeared to bend in one direction, and upon reaching Soap Spring, they came together again, Dave Denny accounting for it by saying:

"They were hunting for some kind of game, sir, and spread out to find it.

"It might have been human game, and maybe only game for grub."

Canteens were filled at Soap Spring, a lunch partaken of, and then it was to be a long march, without food or water for the horses until the Colorado was reached, if the trails led to the Ferry, and there was every indication that they did.

That Buffalo Bill had steadily followed the greater number of tracks thus far was proven by his own trail being seen at both springs, though faintly.

All along the tracks were so faint that unless on the search for them they would not have been seen, and the numerous game tracks at the watering place blotted the others out almost entirely. At Soap Spring the tracks seemed fresher, however, than at the other watering place of Jacob's Pool, and the ashes were there of a fire but recently built.

From there the trail led directly back toward Lee's Ferry, and all the tracks were together save one.

That one branched off on the right toward the Colorado's banks, and it was Buffalo Bill's.

And this trail was the one they followed, for Buffalo Bill had some good reason for deserting the trail he had been following, both Lieutenant Keyes and Dave Denny agreed.

It was the middle of the afternoon when they reached the precipice banks of the Colorado River, and but few of the party dared approach near enough to look over the edge down into the foaming current far below.

But here and there, close along the edge, Dave Denny reported the trail of Buffalo Bill as leading on toward the Ferry.

There were ravines now and then to be gone around, and occasionally one that could be crossed, and still sticking to the chief of scouts' trail, they went as it went, up and down the rugged climbs.

"See, sir, there is a clump of cedars in this ravine, and the chief's trail turns toward them, instead of going straight on ahead, as he could have done," said Dave Denny.

"Better go there, too, Dave, though, of course, Cody had to retrace his steps to get out of this ravine," said Lieutenant Keyes.

And on Dave Denny went, following the trail to the cedars.

There were a score of them growing at the head of the ravine, and as he drew near, riding a hundred feet ahead of the command, Dave Denny was seen to suddenly halt and hold up his hand.

Lieutenant Keyes called to his men to be on their guard, and then spurred quickly to where Dave Denny stood, for he had now dismounted.

"What is it, Dave?"

"See there, sir."

"A dead body, as I live!"

"Yes, sir, there has been trouble right here."

Then the officer and the scout advanced together, and entering the cedar thicket, they beheld the form of a man lying upon the straw bedding.

By his side were some blankets and half a dozen canteens, a bag well filled with provisions, and he lay upon his back, his hands prayerfully clasped upon his breast, the attitude in striking contrast to what had doubtless been his death, for one hand had been shattered by a bullet, and in the center of his forehead was a wound which showed how he had been killed.

But a rifle and three revolvers, with his knife, lay by his side.

"See here, sir," and Dave Denny took from between the folded hands a slip of paper.

It was a pencilled note, and read:

"Lieutenant Keyes:

"Dear Sir: Please bury this body, for I had not the time.

"I will continue to mark my trail, and acquaint you by note with any important discovery I may make. "CODY."

"Not a word of what happened here to cause this man's death."

"No, sir; that's Chief Cody's way."

"But he must have killed him?"

"Yes, sir; it looks that way to me."

"Call the men, and we will bury him, for, fortunately, there is some soil here," said Lieutenant Keyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE BLACK MUSTANG.

When Buffalo Bill took up the trail of Little Dick, where Dave Denny showed it to him, he went off with the hope of finding out what had been the fate of the boy, and of finding those who had been his cruel foes, for he could not shake the belief from his mind that the black mustang and his bound victim had gone over the Colorado's cliff banks together.

There was every reason for him to believe so, for had the horse not been running with blind madness toward the cliff and had he not heard that despairing cry ring out in the night, about the time when the animal would have gone over the cliff had he held straight on?

Still, Buffalo Bill was determined to do his best to find out just what happened, and if the boy had been slain to make his slayers answer for it.

That the men whom he had seen at Lee's Ferry, and who had pursued him had been the boy's captors Buffalo Bill had not the slightest doubt.

He would have gone straight on to the Ferry, and there taken their trail, urging Lieutenant Keyes to press rapidly on after him, but he wished to learn first if the black mustang had gone over the cliff, and then to go to the canyon out of which he had come, and press on from there with a better knowledge of what had really happened.

To do this he must follow the trail of the boy from where Dave Denny had shown it to him.

Going along, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, Buffalo Bill suddenly drew rein.

He did so just where the trail of the spotted pony led by a large rock.

There the tracks showed that the pony had made a sudden swerve to one side, and there were signs of a struggle there, such as would be made by a horse trying to free himself from some one who had grasped him unawares by the bridle rein.

Dismounting, Buffalo Bill left his horse, and set to work in the quiet, determined manner natural to him.

He felt that he had made an important discovery, for he said:

"That pony was caught by the rein by some one hidden behind this rock, who sprang out upon him, as he was lassoed.

"There are traces of a hard struggle here, and here are blood spots.

"Whoever captured the boy hurt him, or got hurt.

"I can trace no boot tracks, but it seems there are moccasin signs upon the hard soil.

"I will look about for other pony tracks."

But none could be found, and, going on his way once more, still following the trail of the spotted pony, Buffalo Bill made another discovery, which was no more than that the boy's horse had been led by some one.

That some one was revealed by moccasin tracks in some soft soil, and the pony, too, had been going at a slow walk, as his trail showed.

The scout seemed pleased with what he had found out, and upon reaching the spot where pony tracks were merged in with many others, both shod and unshod, he knew that they were the ones he had followed the day before, and had given up when he lost the trail, rather than search for it.

Thus he went on, until, as has been seen, he left the note for Lieutenant Keyes, and started off on the trail made by the iron-shod horses alone, over a dozen in number.

He saw how they scattered, just as Dave Denny had later, and he also read that they were hunting the country for something or some one.

He tracked them to Jacob's Pool, later to Soap Spring, and could readily understand, when not looking for trails, why he had not seen them the day before in passing in haste.

So on he went, bearing away toward the Colorado, for he realized that he was but following the track of the men who had pursued him, and to find them he must hasten on to Lee's Ferry and from there track them.

On he went, until he reached the canyon from whence the black mustang had come, and from there to the Colorado he had gone.

Reaching the cliff, he dismounted, and began a thorough search.

It did not take him long to discover that the black mustang had not gone over the cliff.

There were his tracks where he had halted almost upon the very edge.

He had halted suddenly, too, as though discovering his own danger just in the nick of time to save himself and his victim.

Then his trail led off at a trot to the right, and that was toward the Colorado.

"Has he missed death here to be retaken by his foes at the Ferry?" muttered Buffalo Bill.

Again mounting, he rode on, keeping the faint trail, only here and there seen, of the black mustang in view, until, while crossing a ravine, he saw a puff of smoke burst out of some cedars, heard a twanging sound, and felt a gush of water over him, as his canteen, hanging under his left arm, was torn by a bullet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SHOT FROM THE CEDARS.

Buffalo Bill always was a man of prompt action, knowing just what to do in a trying moment.

He did not lose his nerve on this occasion, for hardly had the bullet torn across the canteen when he had slipped from his saddle on the side of his horse opposite to the one from whence the shot had come, and in an instant his rifle was leveled, his eyes searching for his hidden foe.

But that foe, confident in his aim, hearing the bullet's twang as it struck the canteen, seeing the scout's quick dropping from his saddle, supposed that the shot had proven fatal, and sprang from his covert, his revolver in hand.

Too late he discovered his mistake, and raising his revolver to fire, saw a puff from the rifle and felt his hand shattered.

But it was a life and death struggle with him now, and he hastily drew a second weapon with his left hand, while Buffalo Bill called out:

"Drop that weapon, quick!"

"I do not wish to kill you!"

But the answer was a shot, the bullet glancing upon the saddle-horn within a few inches of the scout's face.

"That man is dangerous—he forces me to kill him," muttered Buffalo Bill, and he fired with his revolver just as another bullet flew by his head.

It was the last shot from the cedars.

The scout's aim was more sure.

His bullet struck the one who had tried to kill him squarely in the forehead.

But Buffalo Bill was cautious.

Why should one man be there?

There must be more.

So he left his horse, and advanced cautiously from rock to rock.

Soon he came to the prostrate form.

It was a burly form, a face dark, bearded, and ugly even in death.

He was dressed in a frontier costume, and had two revolvers in his belt, besides the one lying near him.

A bowie knife was there too, and his rifle lay upon the pine straw near a spread blanket.

There was a tiny spring near, that, after flowing a short distance, buried itself in the rocks to trickle downward and mingle in the Colorado's waters far below.

No horse was there, but the man had quite a belonging in the way of canteens for water, a coffee pot, tin cup, frying pan and plate.

He had, too, a canvas to serve as a shelter from rain, a rubber blanket, leather bag full of ammunition, bag of provisions, and another bag, which the scout, in his search, opened.

A whistle of surprise was given at his discovery.

There were a dozen watches, all gold, chains, some jewelry, rings, a number of valuable souvenirs of various kinds, a bag of silver coins, another of gold, in its crude state, a third of gold coin, and a roll of bank notes, the money amounting to some three thousand dollars and the other things about half that value.

"I think I see the situation."

"This man I am sure I saw among the gang encamped at Lee's Ferry, and he has taken advantage of the chase after me to rob his comrades and skip."

"He dared not go on horseback, as he could be tracked, so hoofed it, and came here to hide until he was sure of escape."

"Seeing me, he concluded to supply himself with a horse and what else of value he could find; but he missed his calculation and his aim was not true."

"Mine was better."

With this grim solution of the character of his foe, Buffalo Bill placed him in a decent position, folded his hands upon his heart, took a bundle of papers from an inner pocket he found in the man's vest, and placing them with the bag of valuables, strapped it to his saddle.

Then he wrote the note to Lieutenant Keyes, and, filling his canteen, for he had two, with fresh water, he watered his horse and rode on his way to further prosecute his search for the missing son of Colonel Dearborn, for now he felt assured that the boy had not taken the plunge from the Colorado cliffs, though he had little hope of finding him still alive after the time that had passed since he had seen him, bound as he was to the back of the black mustang.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MYSTERIOUS CANYON.

Still pressing forward upon the trail, Buffalo Bill began to realize that matters were shaping themselves in such a way that, with the scouts and soldiers also pressing toward a given point, they must all meet at Lee's Ferry.

That the outlaws had returned to Lee's Ferry after their pursuit of him, he was now assured.

They could cross the river, and then they would be, as they supposed, in a country where the soldiers dared not pursue them, even if they suspected there was to be a pursuit of them.

Once across the river, they had the Grand Canyon country to hide in, upon their right, a vast expanse of country to the south in front of them, and the Navahoe country on their left, where soldiers would hardly dare penetrate unless in very heavy force.

It was true that Fort Wingate lay a hundred miles southeast of the Ferry, but they could elude the fort readily.

The question in the mind of Buffalo Bill was as to the unfortunate Mazeppa of the black mustang.

Dead or alive, if still bound to the mustang, he must be found by either himself, Lieutenant Keyes, or Lieutenant Ogden Ross's party on their way to the Ferry, as the whole country would be swept by them thoroughly.

The scout, it will be remembered, did not know that Lieutenant Ross had also divided his force, giving yet another chance to drive in the black mustang.

If the latter was not found, when all met at the Ferry, there was nothing to do but to have a search party to still continue the hunt, while they pressed on after the outlaw band, wherever their trail would lead.

If the boy was with them he would be rescued, and if dead, he would be avenged.

These thoughts were in the mind of Buffalo Bill, as, after leaving the retreat of his foe in the cedars, he pressed on toward the canyon where he had intended to camp on his way to the fort, and out of which he had seen the black mustang rush with his victim.

That part of the country is of remarkable formation, and most peculiar withal.

The right bank of the Colorado is seamed with great canyons, running back into the level tableland that is miles in width.

Above this rises the red-stone tableland already referred to, and so it continues in mighty terraces, miles and miles in width, until they end in lofty ranges.

Barren almost of trees, save here and there a cedar thicket; barren equally of water back from the Colorado, and with an iron soil, the whole country can be seen for miles and miles, and if the black mustang was still astray he would be likely to be following along at the base of the red cliffs, where the traveling was fairly good.

In this way he must be seen by the scout, the party of Lieutenant Keyes, Lieutenant Ross and his men upon the red tableland above, or the sergeant's party beyond it, and following along its base.

Though still weighted by his forced rider, dead or alive, the black mustang would doubtless, if driven from one of the springs, seek the Colorado at the Ferry, where there was both water and grass.

If he got there after the departure of the outlaws the chances were that the ferryman would see him, and thus relieve him of his burden, either dead or alive.

But Buffalo Bill would first go to the canyon from whence the black mustang had come.

He reached the break in the red cliff, turned into it, and pushed back toward what appeared to be the end.

But, as he had expected, it was not the end, though this discovery was not made until he rode right up to the towering cliff.

Then he saw a crevice, or split in the cliff, running in at an angle, and in the sandy bottom he discovered tracks coming out.

They did not enter, but came out, and that meant that the horse had gotten into the canyon where he then was by coming through that chasm.

Hence there was a passage through.

Riding into it he pushed on, until a

climb was certain, and here he dismounted, his horse following.

The black mustang had come through, for now and then his tracks were visible, and that, too, with a helpless rider upon his back.

Where horse had gone his horse could go, and so onward and upward the scout held his way.

The chasm was narrow at times, dark, and it seemed that the walls rising a thousand feet above his head were closing in upon him, but he knew that it was only imagination, and still upward he climbed, until at last he came near the surface, the footing was good, and mounting, he rode on for a few minutes to then suddenly rise out of the chasm like an apparition before the astonished eyes of Lieutenant Ogden Ross and his men.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT THE TRAIL REVEALED.

A shout involuntarily broke from the lips of all at the sight of Buffalo Bill, and Lieutenant Ogden Ross called out:

"Why, Cody, you came up out of the earth like a jack-in-the-box."

"Or an apparition, lieutenant, as Lute Burns says."

"But the surprise is mutual, for I did not expect to find you here, sir, and had you been foes I would have had to crawl back into that hole again in double-quick time."

"But may I ask if you followed a trail up here, sir?"

"Yes, and it continues on along the plateau, you see, toward Lee's Ferry."

"Yes, sir, but it is not the trail I was on."

"See, this one track leads down into the crevice I came out of."

"It is the trail of the black mustang, and I came after it, to see where he had come from."

"You are on a trail leading to the Ferry, and it may be a hard climb down, but where horses have gone before you, sir, your animals can go."

"Yes, and it can be no more than the climb up here, if horses went down it."

"Why, we could never have made it upon our troop horses, but these Indian ponies climb like goats."

"Where is Lieutenant Keyes?"

"On my trail, sir, and I will return the way I came."

"Did Lieutenant Keyes take all the rest of the men, sir?"

"No; we divided equally, but my sergeant has gone around the base of this plateau on another trail, to Lee's Ferry, I suppose."

"Yes, sir, as all roads lead to Rome, it was said in olden times, all trails here must lead to Lee's Ferry."

"I am glad you divided your force, sir, as it will take in more country, and make a complete drive in to the Ferry."

After some further conversation, in which Buffalo Bill told of his adventure in the canyon, where the cedars grew, he parted with the command and rode once more down into the chasm.

All watched him until he was out of sight, and it seemed that he was going down into the very depths of the earth.

Dismounting once more, he let his horse follow in his own way, and at last came out in the canyon.

As he had marked his trail, to be readily followed, he took out a slip of paper and pencil, and wrote a note, which he put on a stone, another holding it down, at the entrance to the canyon.

The note was to Lieutenant Keyes, telling him of the meeting with Lieutenant Ogden Ross, and that his force had been very properly divided.

Also he had said that all parties were shaping their way toward Lee's Ferry,

and without making further search as he went along, for the stray black mustang, he would ask Lieutenant Keyes to advance his men in line across the plateau, and thus move on to the Ferry, while he pushed more rapidly forward to see what discoveries he could make there.

This duty done, Buffalo Bill mounted and kept on in the trail at the base of the red cliffs.

As he neared the river at the break, a canyon in the mighty cliffs, where a descent could be made to it, the ground here and there lost its flinty appearance, and in one place he came upon a bit of real soil.

And right there he halted.

What he saw caused him to dismount and long and earnestly he eyed the ground.

What he was gazing upon might not have attracted an ordinary eye, but he saw much to read in it.

He saw tracks, a place in the soft soil where it seemed some large animal had laid down and rolled about.

Whatever it meant, it had a strong attraction for him, for he mused:

"I think this trail is fresher than the tracks of the horses of those outlaws."

"If so, it means that the black mustang came along after they did."

"There is no doubt but that the black mustang left this trail, for I know his tracks now too well to doubt them."

"Yes, he tried to roll here, that is certain, and here are marks to prove that he still carried his burden—yes, and the boy is alive, for here is the imprint of his hand in the dirt."

"It must be the colonel's son, it can be none other, and revenge prompted the cruel torture he has been put to."

"Poor boy! If still alive, how he must suffer."

"I must hasten on, for if the boy got there alive his foes would kill him, for surely they did not intentionally turn that splendid black mustang loose."

"No, my idea is that he escaped them, and now, to get rid of his burden, he is hastening on after them."

"Well, my hope is that he arrived there after the outlaws had gone, and that the strange ferryman saw the horse, found the boy alive, and rescued him."

"And that same ferryman is, to my mind, a man who will bear watching, for something more than a desire to live a hermit life sent him here, to brave the dangers of being killed by Indians and outlaws."

So saying Buffalo Bill again mounted, and now pushed rapidly on toward Lee's Ferry, for there was no longer need of searching for the black mustang, as he had proof that the animal was making for the Colorado River.

Halting, he wrote another note to Lieutenant Keyes, asking him to push on, but to camp on the plateau at night, not pushing on down to the river, and to halt the other two parties if they had not already gotten there.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTURED.

It was night before Buffalo Bill came to the head of the canyon, down which he must go to reach the level space below where the cliffs stood back a quarter and half a mile from the river.

He rode to the brink of the cliff first and looked up and down along the level space for the glimmer of a fire, but saw none.

He scented the air, but could smell no burning wood.

Returning to the head of the canyon, he began the steep descent, leading his horse to ease him of his weight, for he was ever

merciful to a dumb brute, whom he regarded as his good and trusty comrade.

It was a long, hard trail down to the level, and, remounting his horse, he began the search for a place where he could pasture the animal for the night.

He was not long in finding the canyon where the outlaws' horses had been when he crossed so cleverly in their very faces.

There he decided to tether the horse, for one thing seemed certain—that the outlaws were not encamped in the same place or in its near vicinity.

If they were in the river flats they could only be up a valley through which ran a small stream, and where the ferryman had his home.

Whether they were there or not the scout intended to find out.

So, still on his horse, the scout made his way the half mile up from the place where the river could be crossed, to the little valley in which the ferryman had pitched his house.

He rode along the trail near the river, and saw that the boat of the ferryman was fastened to a scrub cedar growing on the bank.

An examination showed that the two paddles had been taken out of the canoe, which, consequently, was rendered useless, for there was nothing on that bleak shore to answer for a paddle or a pole.

The canoe, also, was padlocked to the tree.

Continuing on, Buffalo Bill had gone but a few rods when he heard a footfall distinctly.

There was no hiding place there, so he rode quickly back to the spot where the trail entered the river, and found a retreat behind a big boulder.

The sound was still heard, and he knew that it was the fall of hoofs—that a horse was approaching.

Had he a rider?

Was it the black mustang?

Was it the ferryman? Or, still more, was it one of the outlaws, who, after all, might be encamped at the ferryman's cabin up the valley?

These thoughts flashed through the mind of the still mounted scout like lightning, and he at once got his good lariat ready for use.

The trail to the stream ran within thirty feet of where he was concealed, and with lariat in hand the wary scout was ready for work.

Nearer and nearer sounded the hoof-falls.

Soon there came a shadowy outline into view.

It was that of a fast-running horse—the horse appeared to have no rider!

Yes, it might be the black mustang; so the scout, lariat ready to fling, rode out into the "open," but, much to his surprise, when near him, the plunging animal swerved from the direct trail and rushed straight for the river.

The stars shine brightly in that country, the skies are clear, and the light was fully sufficient to reveal to Buffalo Bill that the horse was carrying a burden.

It seemed to be fastened the length of his back.

Buffalo Bill distinctly heard a low groan as though wrung from human lips by suffering or mental anguish.

"It is the black mustang!"

"The boy still lives!" came in a startled whisper from Buffalo Bill as he made ready for the lariat cast to arrest the madly-rushing steed.

Just then the black mustang plunged into the river.

He evidently intended to swim across to the other shore, which meant that he was still on the trail of the outlaw horses, his instinct guiding him.

With quick decision Buffalo Bill leaped from his own horse and rushed to the river edge. His coil of lasso shot forward and into the air. It settled just in time, and low as the head of the black mustang was while swimming, it caught over it fairly and was tightened with a twang.

With soothing words Buffalo Bill called to the startled animal, that began to struggle.

"My God! he will drown himself and the boy," and throwing aside his weapons, boots, hat and outer clothing, he plunged into the stream.

A few tremendous strokes brought him to the head of the horse; the noose about his neck was loosened, his head was turned shoreward, the scout swimming and guiding him, and in another moment the two landed in safety on the stream's firm bank.

CHAPTER XXII.

LITTLE DICK.

The black mustang was captured.

Furthermore, he was completely subdued.

He stood, dripping and trembling, by the side of the scout.

Upon his back was his forced rider, the boy Mazeppa, if it was indeed the colonel's son.

But, was he still alive?

Quickly a slipknot was made, and when put over the head of the ebony mustang he was led to where the scout had left his own obedient horse. Both were then taken back from the open vicinity to where they were to be tethered for the night, and there were staked out.

This done, the scout immediately severed the thongs which held the limp form to the mustang, and the senseless lad was laid upon the grass.

Bits of dry cedar wood were quickly gathered in the thicket adjoining, a fire was speedily lighted, and then the scout turned to the rescued young rider.

Dropping down by the prostrate form, the scout placed his ear over his heart.

"Thank God! he still lives!"

One arm was terribly swollen and chafed.

"Poor fellow, he tried hard to free himself, and partially did so, but the rawhide thongs had been wet, then dried, and were too much for him, with one hand only to work with.

"How his limbs are swollen, and the back of his neck and head are raw from chafing against the horse's shoulder.

"Fortunately I have my flask, and now that the thongs are cut, circulation will set in and he will soon revive."

A swallow of liquor was forced into the mouth, blankets were spread, the boy was gently placed upon them, after which the scout rubbed his limbs, bathing them and the red face with water from his canteen.

But there was no sign of returning consciousness, and in alarm the scout said:

"Lieutenant Keyes was to bring a surgeon with him!"

"Come, black mustang, you must do good service."

Without taking time to saddle and bridle his own horse, the scout, unstrapping the mustang, mounted bareback, and headed him up the canyon.

He kept him at a good pace, and, reaching the summit, gave a shout of joy as he saw before him the line of horsemen, and heard the call:

"We will camp here, Denny."

"Lieutenant Keyes!" was shouted.

"Ah! Buffalo Bill!"

"Is the surgeon with you, sir?"

"Yes; Doctor Ward."

"Good! Where is he, sir?"

"Ho, Ward! Come here, quick!"

The surgeon was on hand in an instant.

"Lieutenant Keyes, I have to report capturing the black mustang I told you of, and found that the Mazeppa is Colonel Dearborn's boy.

"He is unconscious, and in a bad way, I fear, so I risked leaving him and came here, hoping you had arrived.

"This is the black mustang, sir."

"We will go right on with you, Cody.

"Doctor, you had better push ahead with Cody, and I will follow with the men," Lieutenant Keyes ordered.

Buffalo Bill at once set off with Surgeon Ward, while Lieutenant Keyes, calling out, asked the scout if all the force should descend the canyon.

"Yes, sir, and the others as they come up."

"I will leave a man here to bring the others on," was the answer, and the lieutenant ordered Dave Denny to remain.

Then he started on with the rest of his men.

They had to go down on foot, leading their horses, where Buffalo Bill had forced the surgeon ahead at a dangerous pace, and arrived to find the boy lying just as he had left him.

More wood was thrown upon the fire to give a good light, and Buffalo Bill hastened to the river with the canteens to fill them.

When he returned, Surgeon Ward said:

"It was a narrow call, Cody, but I think we will save him.

"These cuts from the thongs, bruises and chafing amount to little, but the boy is half-starved and delirious from fever.

"It was fortunate you found him as you did."

"Yes, sir, for the black mustang had gone to the cabin of Lee, seen no one about, and had then turned to follow the outlaws across the river.

"He was just entering the stream to swim across when I lassoed him.

"That is the way I think it was, sir."

"Doubtless you are right.

"The boy has been tied to the back of that black mustang for over forty-eight hours, and only his wonderful vitality has kept him alive.

"Heaven grant that I can bring him round all right."

"Yes, sir, if only to tell me who inflicted this cruel torture upon him," said Cody, sternly.

"And when found, no mercy should be shown."

"No mercy, sir," was the low, earnest reply of Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HERMIT FERRYMAN.

When Lieutenant Keyes and his men came up, guided by the fire, they found Doctor Ward and Buffalo Bill working hard over the unconscious youth.

"What is to be done now, Cody, for I follow your lead in this trail?" said Lieutenant Keyes.

"Go into camp, sir, while I make a scout, for I expect to have to ask you to move before dawn."

"All right; say the word.

"I hope the rest of the command will be on hand soon, for that boy is to be avenged," and Lieutenant Keyes glanced at the form of Little Dick as he lay motionless upon the blanket the scout had spread for him.

Buffalo Bill started off on foot up the river bank.

Twice before he had been up to that valley home of the hermit ferryman, and had been kindly treated.

Now he wished to reconnoiter, and discover if the ferryman had others there than himself and wife.

He did not expect to find the band of outlaws there, as they would have dis-

covered the black mustang and his unconscious rider, surely.

Or did they intend that the horse should bear him thus to his death?

Up to the valley Buffalo Bill went, guided only by the starlight.

Soon he came to a glimmer of a light.

It came from the cabin of the hermit ferryman, he knew.

The cabin had a stockade wall about it, he recalled, about five feet high, enclosing about half an acre.

Back of it was a shed for horses and cattle.

But Buffalo Bill recalled that the man also had two savage dogs there, vigilant and dangerous guardians of his home.

Fortunately the wind, the little there was, blew from him, up the river, and they would not scent him.

He remembered, too, that the ferryman had told him his dogs guarded the cabin and the cattle shed, for outlaws often crossed the river at that point, flying from pursuit of soldiers, Mormon officers of the law, or others coming up from New Mexico and making their way north.

With a warning of danger from his dogs, that horse thieves or marauders were about, the hermit ferryman was ready to take the chances of defending his home, aided by his wife.

Up to the stockade wall went Buffalo Bill, and looked over.

The light came from the cabin, through a small outlook window in the door, doubtless opened, as the night was close.

The scout saw no sign of the dogs, but heard voices in the cabin, late as it was.

He heard the voices of two men.

Instantly he made up his mind what he would do.

He would take the chances with the dogs, and, drawing his bowie knife with one hand, he leaped over the stockade and went cautiously toward the cabin.

The dogs had not yet scented the approach of danger, for they did not appear.

Distinctly he heard the voices of two men within.

The cabin had three rooms in a row, and was as strong as a fort.

The roof was flat, the walls extended above it, and from there one man could keep a dozen at bay.

Creeping nearer and nearer, Buffalo Bill looked into the open lookout.

He saw a man with a heavily-bearded face, slouch hat, rough clothing and a belt of arms.

The other man he did not see, but he knew that it must be the ferryman.

He heard the bearded man say:

"Well, I hung back to tell you that the traitor Talbot got all our booty and lit out.

"He will cross here at your ferry, as I said, and he'll have it with him, and I just hung back when the others crossed to make a bargain with you, for I'll give you half he's got if you'll put a bullet into him."

"Murdering men for money is not my trade," said the ferryman, sternly.

"Don't be so awful nice, for I tell you he just did the whole lot of us for all we had in the treasury, and it is a small fortune, though I don't know how much.

"He was smart enough to prepare to skip, and go on foot, so we couldn't track him, and so got away; but we couldn't have trailed him anyway, as, when the captain knew Buffalo Bill had escaped us, he was anxious to get away before he could be back with a force from the fort.

"That is why I played sick, and when you put the band across this afternoon, hung back to stop with you, pretending I couldn't travel, and now you say you won't help me down Talbot."

"I will not, and I wish to set you across

the river to-night, so you can go on and overtake your comrades."

"Let me stay, then, and bring Talbot down with a shot?"

"I will not."

"You must go, for I will have no murder here at my retreat."

"Come, you must go, and now, for if Buffalo Bill is guiding soldiers here I do not wish one of your band found in my house."

"Hands up! for here I stay to get that booty!"

The words were sternly uttered in a low tone, and a revolver whipped out of his belt commanded instant obedience.

The hermit ferryman was fairly trapped, and he knew it, for a room was between that one and where his wife slept, the walls were thick, the doors closed, and he could only obey, for he knew that he dealt with a desperate man.

But as he raised his hands, there broke on his ears the words behind the outlaw:

"Up with your hands, man, for I have you covered!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

A cry broke from the lips of the self-confessed outlaw, and in his terror his revolver dropped from his hand, exploding as it struck the floor.

The report was followed by the savage bark and rush of two huge dogs from some retreat, just as Buffalo Bill pulled the latch-string and stepped into the cabin, closing the door behind him in time to save himself from the brutes.

The man he had covered stood cowed before him, his hands still raised, while the ferryman uttered no word as he gazed at the intruder with white face, and his wife, alarmed by the shot, came to the rescue, rifle in hand.

"Hold, ferryman, I have no quarrel with you, but with that man."

"He is my prisoner!" cried Buffalo Bill.

"Buffalo Bill!"

"That ends me!" groaned the outlaw.

"It will be a good riddance to the country if it does."

"Ferryman, bind that man securely, while I keep him covered," said Buffalo Bill.

The words of the scout brought the color back into the face of the ferryman, and his wife's look of intense anxiety also left her countenance, for both seemed to have dreaded that they were to be the sufferers by Buffalo Bill's midnight visit.

With wonderful alacrity, therefore, the ferryman bound the outlaw, his wife handing him a rope from the next room, and then retreating to make her toilet, for she had come to the rescue of her husband just as she had sprung from her bed.

"Now, pard outlaw, you return with me to my camp, for I heard how you were trying to tempt this man to aid you in a murderous and robbing scheme, and I am glad to know he is the honest fellow he proved himself by his words."

"As for your friend, Talbot, as you called him, he is in his grave, he having fired upon me from ambush, and I killed him, while his booty I have back in camp near the river crossing."

"At daylight, pard ferryman, I wish you to be at the crossing, for there are a troop of soldiers and a dozen scouts to put across the river, as I go on the trail of the band that this man belongs to, and with whom I have a score to settle."

"I will be there, sir, at the appointed time, and serve you as best I can."

"I have another canoe, a larger one, here in the creek, which I will also bring, so you can cross more rapidly," said the ferryman, who was a man of medium height, thickset, but powerfully built and

with a strong, unreadable face, full of determination and nerve.*

Bring your other canoe along, then, for we may have to travel fast and far to overtake that band of outlaws."

"By the way, how many crossed the river?"

"Seventeen, sir."

"Their leader was along?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did they cross here some days ago?"

"Ten days ago, sir, going north toward Fort Farewell."

"There were twenty-one then, for you shot one, the man Talbot was killed, a third fell over a cliff with his horse, I was told, and this man made up the other four."

"Thank you, Ferryman John."

"I am sorry to have alarmed your wife, but am glad I was near to serve you."

"I owe you my life, Mr. Cody," said the ferryman, earnestly.

"I shall never forget it."

"You appear to know me by name."

"The outlaws called you Buffalo Bill, and I have heard of you often," and the ferryman seemed a trifle confused, a fact that did not escape the keen eye of Buffalo Bill.

But the latter said to the outlaw:

"Come, you go with me to camp."

"Keep your dogs off, ferryman, or, if they have to sample some one, let it be this outlaw."

"They will not disturb you, sir, with me near."

"I do not understand how they allowed you to come near."

"Didn't get on to my coming, for the wind was in my favor, and they were taking it easy in the back yard."

With this the ferryman escorted Buffalo Bill and his prisoner beyond the stockade, and there left them, promising to be on hand with his other canoe at dawn.

As they walked on, Buffalo Bill suddenly said:

"Now, I know such men as you ought to hang for your crimes, but perhaps you and I can come to terms."

"For God's sake tell me how!"

"How long have you belonged to that band?"

"Two years."

"Where have you been operating mostly?"

"In New Mexico, south of Wingate."

"Are all the band on this trail?"

"Yes."

"You know where they are going now?"

"Yes."

"You came on with them?"

"Yes."

"You know the trail they will take back?"

"Yes."

"And about where they will camp?"

"I do."

"And you know why they came up here into Arizona?"

"For plunder."

"What else?"

The man was silent.

"I'll tell you that you came up here to kidnap a boy, and some of you were

* Then the Colorado ferryman was known as "Colorado John, the Ferryman." In those days of scouting service, Buffalo Bill met him a number of times, knowing him by the above name, and that he was a Mormon. Years after he was tracked to his retreat, arrested and, after a trial, executed in Utah as John D. Lee, ex-major of the Danite Legion in the Mormon army, and alleged instigator of the terrible Mountain Meadow massacre. During his life as a ferryman, Lee often ferried across the river officers of the law in search of him. Three years ago the writer visited Lee's Ferry with Buffalo Bill, who then and there told him the incidents upon which this story is founded, seated in the cabin of John D. Lee, whose work and energy made the little valley a perfect garden spot in a desert.—The Author.

friendly with the Navahoe Indians, and they aided you, while you also had a friend at Fort Farewell, and after capturing the commandant's son, you tied him, Mazeppa-like, to the back of a black mustang, and—"

"You know it all."

"Then be wise and see if you can't tell the whole story in return for your life, a horse, arms, a few dollars, and a piece of good advice."

"I'll do it."

"I know when I don't hold a trump," was the answer, and ten minutes after the man sat near the camp-fire, while Buffalo Bill and Lieutenant Keyes were listening to what he had to say.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OUTLAW'S CONFESSION.

The outlaw prisoner was feeling nervous as he listened to Buffalo Bill's recital of how he had found him at the ferryman's cabin, and all that he had heard him say, while he also had appeared to force the man to terms or kill him.

The outlaw was not sure that Lieutenant Keyes would be willing to extend clemency to him for what he knew.

The scout did the questioning, at the request of Lieutenant Keyes, and asked:

"What brought your band together?"

"Love of gold."

"To plunder for it, rather than work?"

"About that."

"You did not let a life stand in the way of getting gold?"

"No."

"And you have been marauding about two years?"

"About that."

"Who is your chief?"

"Names do not tell anything, for that is all any of us know about him."

"What is his name?"

"We call him Captain Charlie."

"Describe him."

"Well, you see, the man who is now chief was our lieutenant, for you knocked the captain out of his saddle when they were going up the hill after you."

"Which one was that?"

"His name was Captain Kent, or, at least, that is what we called him."

"He had been captain but six months; he had met Lieutenant Charlie somewhere before, and joined the band, and the lieutenant made a bargain with him of some kind by which he became captain."

"I see, and Captain Kent is the one I shot?"

"He it was."

"Where is his body?"

"Buried up at the head of this canyon."

"And he led this expedition into Arizona?"

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"Plunder, I thought; but our present captain has since told us it was to capture a boy, the son of the commandant of Fort Farewell."

"Ah! And you captured him?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Well, the captain had once lived among the Navahoes and knew their head chief, and we went to their camp, got a band of braves to support us, and then went into hiding until some man in the fort planned to get the boy to ride out and into our trap, for that man, a soldier, I heard, and the captain met and arranged the plan."

"And the boy rode into your trap?"

"He did."

"Well?"

"I suppose I might as well tell all."

"It would be better if you did, as far as you are concerned."

"I will."

"Well, we got the boy, and the captain seemed to hate him worse than an Indian can hate, for he tied him to the back of a black mustang and thus carried him along."

"Well?"

"At our first camp at night the mustang ran away with the boy, for the captain would not release him, and told the Indians they could take him to their camp and torture him to death."

"We all tried to catch the mustang, and divided forces the next morning and looked for him."

"But we got to the river here, and having sent a man on ahead to see if the black mustang had crossed, we saw you and thought you was our pard, but it was a mistake."

"Yes, a slight one, but it served me well just then to be mistaken for an outlaw."

"It did; but we went after you, and the captain got it in the head."

"But we were anxious to catch you, and so pressed on, but you gave us the slip."

"While we were after you, Talbot, whom we left to guard the camp, with others who were to bury the captain, robbed us and skipped out, and you got him too."

"Yes, and his booty."

"Well, I wanted it, and when Captain Charlie said we must push across and back for New Mexico, I played sick and got left, determined to kill Talbot when he came to cross, and get the treasure, for I felt sure he would not dare go the other way up through Utah."

"I wanted help, and I tried to ring in the ferryman, for Talbot was a bad man to handle, but the ferryman was too good, and then you chipped in and ended my plans."

"Now you have the whole story, and if you wish me to guide you on after the band I'll do it, if you spare me, give me a couple of horses, a good outfit, weapons, provisions, and a few hundreds in money."

"All except the few hundreds you shall have, but we will give you some money, and advise you to try and lead a better life in future."

"Is that all right, Lieutenant Keyes?"

"Yes, we can promise him that, and if he ever comes up into this country again that he'll be shot."

"I'm not coming, sir; but let me tell you that the captain left some papers which Captain Charlie has, so you may find out who he is by them."

As it was nearly dawn, and as the other two parties had arrived while Buffalo Bill was at the ferryman's cabin, the order was given to go down to the river to cross.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WIPE-OUT.

The hermit ferryman was at the tree to which his canoe was made fast, and had the other one with him.

A scout volunteered to take the second canoe, so, saddles and traps were first taken over, two led horses swimming behind each little boat.

A dozen trips to and fro were made, and the party that were going were all over in safety. The surgeon, two of the scouts and six soldiers had been left in the camp with Little Dick, who was showing signs of improvement.

The ferryman had wished him carried to his cabin, but the surgeon did not care to remove him, particularly as the man said that he and his wife would do all they could to make the poor fellow more comfortable; so, ferrying the little command across, he carried out his kind intention.

In the mean time, bound to his horse, the outlaw had ridden ahead with Buffalo Bill and said that he would readily pick up the

trail of his comrades when the pursuers came to where the ground would reveal their tracks.

Arriving at Navahoe Springs, some miles from the river, they discovered that the outlaws had camped there, and refilling canteens with the cool spring water and giving their horses a short rest and a few bites of grass, which grew near, they pushed on, the outlaw saying to Buffalo Bill:

"We will catch them in their camp tonight, never fear."

"But remember, when I show you their camp I'm to light out, so have all fixed for me to go, for if any of them escape I'll be the one they will suspect, and they'll go for me."

"Never fear; there will be no escapes. This will be a case of kill or capture all."

"A wipe-out, eh?"

"About that."

The prophecy of the outlaw was verified, for pushing ahead rapidly, soon after dark they came to a valley where campfires came into view.

The outlaw described the locality to Buffalo Bill, who then went ahead to reconnoiter, accompanied by the dashing young commander, Edward Keyes.

They were gone an hour, and their plan of attack was formed.

"Now you can go, and you had better push the breeze pretty lively for whatever point you like, so you do not come our way again."

"Here is your money, and as you have your two horses and your outfit, be off!"

"Pard, I will, and I thanks you for acting square by me, and wishes you luck."

"Good-by, lieutenant, and Buffalo Bill, when I hears people say they has heard of Buffalo Bill, I'll tell 'em I know him—that he's square, and a man clean through."

The outlaw, with this, rode away in the darkness, leading his extra horse; and a minute after the scouts were creeping in to surround the outlaw camp and capture their horses, while Lieutenant Keyes followed slowly with his troopers in two columns, to charge in upon the band, who then were little dreaming of the impending danger.

Suddenly, right close to the camp, a wild war-cry rang out, Buffalo Bill's well-known signal. The scouts fired upon the camp, when at once in dashed the soldiers and surrounded the whole gang.

The outlaws were surprised completely, but they rallied quickly, and a fierce fight followed, though a short one, for in a few moments their cries for quarter were heard.

"Five prisoners, sir; all the rest killed."

"A corporal, a soldier and a scout killed; three soldiers wounded, and a loss of three horses for the command," reported Lieutenant Ogden Ross to Lieutenant Keyes, who asked:

"How many outlaws killed?"

"Twelve, sir."

"And five prisoners, Ogden?"

"Yes, sir."

"All present or accounted for, then, for there were seventeen."

"A wipe-out, as Buffalo Bill called it," said Lieutenant Keyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

The soldiers went into camp in the valley where the battle had been fought, and the tired men and horses were soon resting.

They were early astir, however, breakfast cooked, the dead buried—those of the command apart from the others—and then with the prisoners and captured outlaw horses, the march was begun for the Colorado, some of the wounded being seriously injured.

A rapid ride brought them to the Colorado at sunset. The ferryman was there with his two canoes to take them across, the horses now being turned loose to swim over in a bunch, which they did.

The ferryman had good news for them, for he told how Little Dick, under the devoted care of the surgeon, had returned to consciousness, and though weak and suffering, was in a fair way to recover.

"Cody, we must stay here for a few days until Little Dick is able to travel by easy stages to the fort, and we will then make Soap Springs the first night, Jacob's Pool the second, and Fort Farewell the third."

"I wish you to start in the morning for the fort, and to report to Colonel Dearborn, telling him the good news of his son's rescue, and prospect of soon being with him."

After an early breakfast Cody had a look at Little Dick, who was improving rapidly, and then, mounting his horse, started for the fort.

When Colonel Dearborn saw him at sunset coming at a canter up to headquarters, he said in a low tone to the major, who was with him:

"Is he coming to tell me my boy is dead?"

Before the major could reply, Buffalo Bill took off his sombrero and called out:

"All right, sir! Little Dick is found and on the way to the fort!"

Then the two officers heard Buffalo Bill's modest story of the whole expedition, and the colonel received the papers handed him with the remark:

"These belonged to the outlaw chief, whose real name was Kenneth Carr."

"Cody, you have made me your devoted friend for life, and let me tell you that in becoming a scout, a splendid detective was lost to the world, for it was your cleverness in ferreting out this whole deal that saved my boy."

Three days later the command under Lieutenant Keyes returned, and Little Dick was able to tell his father how two Indians had ambushed him, seized his pony, and, though he killed one, the other captured him and his horse was made to carry him and the dead redskin to where Captain Carr was waiting.

He told him, too, that he had seen Buffalo Bill's horse, but not the scout himself, and how nearly the black mustang had come to going over the Colorado's banks, how he had freed one of his hands and feet, and thus had been able to sit up on the horse until too weak to do so, and then he lost consciousness, adding:

"And Buffalo Bill says I am to have the black mustang, father."

The colonel, meanwhile, had investigated Private Bradley Moore, of B troop, and found in him Brad Moorhouse, his boyhood friend, and a cousin of Kenneth Carr.

He also, from a search of his traps, found that he had been in correspondence with Kenneth Carr, and the two had entered into a plot to further dog Colonel Dearborn.

Upon this proof the traitor soldier was arrested on the charge of "conspiracy to kill," tried, and sent to an Eastern prison, where he was shot in trying to make his escape.

Mrs. Dearborn never learned of the capture of her son until she heard it from his own lips when he went East to attend college, which he left after a year, to enter the West Point Military Academy, from which he graduated with honor, and is now a first lieutenant in the army, and has rendered gallant service out on the frontier, where he is still remembered by old soldiers as Little Dick, the Boy Mazeppa.

THE END.

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